

RON THORNBURGH
Secretary of State



First Floor, Memorial Hall
120 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66612-1594
(785) 296-4564

STATE OF KANSAS

For more information contact:

Jesse Borjon, Public Relations Director
Office of the Secretary of State
First Floor, Memorial Hall
120 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1594
785/249-2418
785/296-4580
jesseb@kssos.org

Letter to the Editor

December 5, 2001

By Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh

Thornburgh Urges Congress to Pass Bipartisan Election Reform Bill

One year ago this month, the United States was in the middle of a political nightmare that would keep our nation in a cold sweat for five weeks. Public confidence in our election system – the mechanics of which had been sorely neglected for years – plummeted. We had worked so hard to guarantee every citizen's right to vote, yet the most technologically advanced nation in the world fell short of that promise on Election Day 2000.

As president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, I have had an unprecedented opportunity to be at the forefront of discussions and negotiations for a bipartisan, comprehensive, and effective federal election reform bill. After working on this issue for the past year, we are beginning to see our work pay off.

Congressmen Bob Ney (R-OH) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD), the top Republican and Democrat on the committee with jurisdiction over federal election reform, recently introduced the "Help America Vote Act of 2001." The bipartisan legislation is a mix of federal assistance to states and basic election standards. In order for states to receive federal assistance, the bill would require states to adopt a statewide voter registration system linked to local jurisdictions, in-precinct provisional voting, a system for maintaining the accuracy of voter registration records, and assurances that voters will be able to correct voting errors.

In addition, states must also adopt safeguards to ensure that overseas and military votes are counted and that uniform standards defining what constitutes a vote be adopted. This bill authorizes \$2.65 billion for federal election reform, including \$400 million to replace unreliable punch-card voting systems. The remaining \$2.25 billion will be available to help states maintain accurate lists of eligible voters, improve equipment, recruit and train poll workers, improve access for disabled voters, and educate voters about their rights.

- MORE -

- PAGE 2 -

This bipartisan legislation is not perfect; no bill is. However, it is a bipartisan bill with strong support on both sides of the aisle, and will shore up the integrity of our electoral process. It's clear that with just a few short weeks before Congress adjourns for the year, time is of the essence. And the time for action on election reform is now.

I urge all Kansans to join me and the growing chorus of legislators and election officials in urging Congress to pass the bipartisan "Help America Vote Act" without delay.

-##-